

Art of Pacific Cultures



28-1 • THE BARUNGA STATEMENT

Various artists from Arnhem Land and central Australia. 1988. Ochres on composition board with collage of printed text on paper, 48" × 47¼" (122 × 120 cm). Reproduced with permission of the Northern and Central Land Councils.

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In 1788, when Captain James Cook arrived in Australia, it was home to at least 300,000 Indigenous Australians, whose ancestors had arrived 50,000 years earlier, and who spoke over 250 languages. For 40,000 years the Indigenous Australians had been creating rock art and were the oldest continuous culture in the world. Nevertheless, Cook claimed Australia for Britain as a *terra nullius*, a land that belonged to no one. Within a few decades, European diseases had killed 50 percent of Indigenous Australians. Colonization and the arrival of missionaries would change their lives forever.

Two hundred years later, Indigenous Australians presented what is now known as **THE BARUNGA STATEMENT** (FIG. 28-1) to the then prime minister Bob Hawke. It was inspired by the Yirrkala Bark Petitions, which 25 years earlier had gained national attention when indigenous land rights claims were presented to the government on traditional bark paintings from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. The Barunga Statement placed its call for broader Aboriginal rights in text on paper collaged onto composition board decorated with two different styles of indigenous painting: one from Arnhem Land (on the left; see also FIG. 28-3) and the other from Australia's Central Desert area (on the right; see also "A Closer Look," page 878). Painted in natural ochers,

the cross hatching (*rarrk*) and zigzag patterns from the north contrast with the more fluid curved lines and dots that fill the central desert painting. In both, the artists used a dazzling array of symbols to retell stories about the adventures of ancestral beings.

In 1992, the Australian High Court rejected Cook's *terra nullius* argument and granted land rights to Indigenous Australians. When no treaty between the national government and Indigenous Australians followed, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, an indigenous leader, asked for the Barunga Statement back so that he could bury it. Today, however, it still hangs in Parliament and the struggle for full rights for Indigenous Australians continues.

Throughout the Pacific, contact with the West has had a significant impact on indigenous cultures, though to different degrees. In New Zealand, for example, the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) recognized Maori ownership of land and gave Maori the rights of British subjects, establishing early on a different political dynamic. Nonetheless, although numerous issues remain there, as well as in other parts of the region, Pacific islanders continue to use the arts to express and preserve their own rich and distinctive cultural identities.

LEARN ABOUT IT

28.1 Recognize how the availability of raw materials affects artistic choices and styles throughout the Pacific.

28.2 Examine the role the human body plays as a subject and medium in Pacific art.

28.3 Investigate ways that ancestor rituals influence the art in different Pacific cultures.

28.4 Assess the impact of Western contact on art in the Pacific.

THE PEOPLING OF THE PACIFIC

On a map with the Pacific Ocean as its center, only the peripheries of the great landmasses of Asia and the Americas appear. Nearly one-third of the earth's surface is taken up by this vast watery expanse. Europeans arriving in Oceania in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries noted four distinct but connected cultural-geographic areas: Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia (**MAP 28-1**). Australia includes the continent, as well as the island of Tasmania to the southeast. Melanesia ("black islands," a reference to the dark skin color of its inhabitants) includes New Guinea and the string of islands that extends eastward from it as far as Fiji and New Caledonia. Micronesia ("small islands"), to the north of Melanesia, is a region of small islands and coral atolls. Polynesia ("many islands") is scattered over a huge, triangular region defined by New Zealand in the south, Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the east, and the Hawaiian islands to the north. The last region on earth to be inhabited by humans, Polynesia covers some 7.7 million square miles, of which fewer than 130,000 square miles are dry land—and most of that is New Zealand. With the exception of temperate New Zealand, with its marked seasons and snowcapped mountains, Oceania is in the tropics, that is, between the tropic of Cancer in the north and the tropic of Capricorn to the south.

Australia, Tasmania, and New Guinea formed a single continent during the last Ice Age, which began some 2.5 million years ago. About 50,000 years ago, when the sea level was about 330 feet lower than it is today, people moved to this continent from Southeast Asia, making at least part of the journey over open water. Around 27,000 years ago, humans were settled on the large

islands north and east of New Guinea as far south as San Cristobal, but they ventured no farther for another 25,000 years. By about 4000 BCE—possibly as early as 7000 BCE—the people of Melanesia were raising pigs and cultivating taro, a plant with edible rootstocks. As the glaciers melted, the sea level rose, flooding low-lying coastal land. By around 4000 BCE a 70-mile-wide waterway, now called the Torres Strait, separated New Guinea from Australia, whose indigenous people continued their hunting and gathering way of life into the twentieth century.

The settling of the rest of the islands of Melanesia and the westernmost islands of Polynesia—Samoa and Tonga—coincided with the spread of the Lapita culture, named for a site in New Caledonia. The Lapita people were Austronesian speakers who probably migrated from Taiwan to Melanesia about 6,000 years ago. They spread throughout the islands of Melanesia, beginning around 1500 BCE. They were farmers and fisherfolk who cultivated taro and yams, and brought with them dogs, pigs, and chickens, animals that these colonizers needed for food. They also carried with them the distinctive ceramics whose remnants today enable us to trace the extent of their travels. Lapita potters produced dishes, platters, bowls, and jars. Sometimes they covered their wares with a red slip, and they often decorated them with bands of incised and stamped patterns—dots, lines, and hatching—that may also have been used on bark cloth and in tattoos. Most of the decoration was geometric, but some was figurative. The human face that appears in the example in **FIGURE 28-2** is among the earliest representations of a human being, one of the most important subjects in Oceanic art. The Lapita people were skilled shipbuilders and navigators and engaged in inter-island trade. Over time the Lapita culture lost its widespread cohesion and evolved into various local forms. Its end is generally dated to the early centuries of the Common Era.

Polynesian culture emerged in the eastern Lapita region on the islands forming Tonga and Samoa. Just prior to the beginning of the first millennium CE, daring Polynesian seafarers, probably in double-hulled sailing canoes, began settling the scattered islands of Far Oceania and eastern Micronesia. Voyaging over open water, sometimes for thousands of miles, they reached Hawaii and Rapa Nui after about 500 CE and settled New Zealand around 800/900–1200 CE.

While this history of migrations across Melanesia to Polynesia and Micronesia allowed for cross-cultural borrowings, there are distinctions between these areas and within the regions as well. The islands that make up Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia include both low-lying coral atolls and the tall tops of volcanic mountains that rise from the ocean floor. Raw materials available to residents of these islands vary greatly, and islander art and architecture utilize these materials in different ways. The soil of volcanic islands can be very rich, supporting densely populated settlements with a local diversity of plants and animals. On the other hand, the poorer soil of coral atolls cannot support large populations. In a like manner, whereas volcanic islands provide good stone for tools and building (as at Nan Madol, see **FIG. 28-10**), coral is sharp but not particularly



28-2 • FRAGMENTS OF A LARGE LAPITA JAR
From Venumbo Reef, Santa Cruz Island, Solomon Islands. c. 1200–1100 BCE. Clay, height of human face motif approx. 1½" (4 cm).



MAP 28-1 • PACIFIC CULTURAL-GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

The Pacific cultures are spread over four vast areas: Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

hard, and the strongest tools on a coral atoll are often those made from giant clam shells. Generally, the diversity of both plants and animals decreases from west to east among the Pacific islands.

The arts of this vast and diverse region display an enormous variety that is closely linked to each community's ritual and religious life. In this context, the visual arts were often just one strand in a rich weave that also included music, dance, and oral literature.

AUSTRALIA

Until European settlers disrupted their way of life, the hunter-gatherers of Australia were closely attuned to the environments in which they lived. Their only modification of the landscape was regular controlled burning of the underbrush, which encouraged new plant life and attracted animals. Their intimate knowledge of plants, animals, and water sources enabled them to survive and thrive in a wide range of challenging environments.

Indigenous Australian life is intimately connected with the concept of the Dreamtime, or the Dreaming. Not to be confused

with our notions of sleep and dreams, the Dreaming refers to the period before humans existed. (The term, a translation from Arrrente, one of the more than 250 languages spoken in Australia when Europeans arrived, was first used in the late nineteenth century in an attempt to understand the indigenous worldview.) According to this complex belief system, the world began as a flat, featureless place. Ancestral Spirit Beings emerged from the earth or arrived from the sea, taking many different forms. The Spirit Beings had numerous adventures, and in crossing the continent, they created all of its physical features: mountains, sand hills, creeks, and water holes. They also brought about the existence of animals, plants, and humans and created the ceremonies and sacred objects needed to ensure that they themselves were remembered, a system sometimes referred to as Aboriginal Laws. The Spirit Beings eventually returned to the earth or became literally one of its features. Thus, they are identified with specific places, which are honored as sacred sites. Indigenous Australians who practice this traditional religion believe that they are descended from the Spirit Beings and associate

themselves with particular places related to the ancestors' stories and transformations.

Knowledge of the Dreaming stories, and of the objects related to them, is sacred and secret. Multiple levels of meaning are learned over a lifetime and restricted to those properly trained and initiated to know each level. As a result, an outsider's understanding of the stories and related art (objects and motifs) is strictly limited to what is allowed to be public. Some stories are shared by many tribes across great distances, while others are specific to one area. Men and women have their own stories, women's often associated with food and food gathering.

Since the Dreaming has never ceased, the power of the ancestral Spirit Beings still exists. Indigenous Australians have developed a rich artistic life to relive the stories of the ancestors and transmit knowledge about them to subsequent generations. Ceremonial art forms include paintings on rock and bark, sand drawings, and ground sculptures. Sacred objects, songs, and dances are used to renew the supernatural powers of the ancestors in ceremonial meetings, called *corroborees*. In **FIGURE 28-3**, Western Arnhem Land artist Jimmy Midjaw Midjaw depicts such a meeting held by a group of Mimi, spirits who live in the narrow spaces between rocks by day and come out at night. Specific to this area, they taught humans how to hunt and cook animals, as well as to dance, sing, and play instruments in ceremonies. Tall, thin, humanlike figures, often in motion, they were painted in ancient rock shelters, and since at least the late nineteenth century, on eucalyptus bark.

Bark paintings are found throughout northern Australia, where numerous regional styles exist. In Western Arnhem Land, the background is usually a monochromatic red ochre wash, with figures in white, black, and red pigments. In the 1950s and 1960s, Midjaw Midjaw was part of a prolific group of artists on Minjilang (Croker Island) that became well known through the anthropologists and collectors working in the area.

MELANESIA

Since they usually rely at least partially on agriculture for survival, the inhabitants of Melanesia live in permanent settlements, many of which feature spaces set aside for ritual use. Social position and status are not inherited or determined by birth, but are achieved by the accumulation of wealth (often in the form of pigs), by the demonstration of leadership, and, often, by participation in men's societies. Much ceremony is related to rituals associated with these societies, including initiation into different levels or grades. Other important rituals facilitate relationships with the deceased and with supernatural forces. Melanesian art is often bold and dazzling. Masking and body decoration, often as part of ceremonial performances, are important, though often ephemeral. Men are prominent in the sculptural and masking traditions; women play significant roles as audience and are also known for their skill in making bark cloth, woven baskets, pottery, and other aesthetically pleasing objects.



28-3 • Jimmy Midjaw Midjaw THREE DANCERS AND TWO MUSICIANS: CORROBOREE OF MIMI, SPIRITS OF THE ROCKS

Minjilang (Croker Island), West Arnhem Land, Australia. Mid 20th century. Natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, 23" × 35" (59 × 89 cm). Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, France. (MNAO 64.9.103)

NEW GUINEA

New Guinea, the largest island in the Pacific (and, at 1,500 miles long and 1,000 miles wide, the second-largest island in the world), is today divided between two countries. Its eastern half is part of the modern nation of Papua New Guinea; the western half is West Papua, a province of present-day Indonesia. Located near the equator and with mountains that rise to 16,000 feet, the island affords its inhabitants a variety of environments, from coastal mangrove marshes to grasslands, from dense rainforests to swampy river valleys. The population is equally diverse, with coastal fishermen, riverine hunters, slash-and-burn agriculturalists, and more stable farmers in the highlands. Between New Guinea itself and the smaller neighboring islands, more than 700 languages have been identified.

THE KORAMBO OR CEREMONIAL HOUSE OF THE ABELAM OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA The Abelam, who live in the foothills of the mountains on the north side of the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea, raise pigs and cultivate yams, taro, bananas, and sago palms. In traditional Abelam society, people live in

extended families or clans in hamlets. Wealth among the Abelam is measured in pigs, but men gain status from participation in a yam cult that has a central place in Abelam society. The yams that are the focus of this cult—some of which reach an extraordinary 12 feet in length—are associated with clan ancestors and the potency of their growers. Village leaders renew their relationship with the forces of nature as represented by yams during the Long Yam Festival, which is held at harvest time and involves processions, masked figures, singing, and the ritual exchange of the finest yams.

An Abelam hamlet includes sleeping houses, cooking houses, storehouses for yams, a central space for rituals, and a ceremonial or spirit house, the **korambo** (*haus tambaran* in Pidgin). In this ceremonial structure reserved for the men of the village, the objects associated with the yam cult and with clan identity are kept hidden from women and uninitiated boys. Men of the clan gather in the *korambo* to organize rituals, especially initiation rites, and to conduct community business. The prestige of a hamlet is linked to the quality of its *korambo* and the size of its yams. Constructed on a frame of poles and rafters and roofed with split cane and thatch, *korambo* are built with a triangular floor plan, the side walls meeting at the back of the building. The elaborately decorated façade consists of three parts, beginning at the bottom: a woven mat, a painted and carved wooden lintel, and painted sago bark panels (FIG. 28-4). In this example, built about 1961, red, white, and black faces of spirits (*nggwai*) appear on the façade's bark panels, and the figure at the top is said to represent a female flying witch. This last figure is associated with the feminine power of the house itself. The projecting pole at the top of the *korambo* is the only male element of the architecture, and is said to be the penis of the house. The small door at the lower right is a female element, a womb; entering and exiting the house is the symbolic equivalent to death and rebirth. The Abelam believe the paint itself has magical qualities. Regular, ritual repainting revitalizes the images and ensures their continued potency.

Every stage in the construction of a *korambo* is accompanied by ceremonies, which are held in the early morning while women and boys are still asleep. The completion of the façade of a house is celebrated with a ceremony called *mindja*, which includes all-night dancing, and which may continue for six months, until the roof is completely thatched. Women participate in these inaugural ceremonies and are allowed to enter the new house, which afterward is ritually cleansed and closed to them.

BILUM—CONTEMPORARY NET BAGS OF HIGHLAND NEW GUINEA Women's arts in Papua New Guinea tend to be less spectacular and more subtle than men's, but nonetheless significant. Both functionally and symbolically, they contribute to a balance between male and female roles in society. **Bilum**, for example, are netted bags made mainly by women throughout the central highlands of New Guinea (FIG. 28-5). Looped from a single long thread spun on the thigh, *bilum* are very strong and, as



28-4 • EXTERIOR OF KORAMBO (HAUS TAMBARAN)
Kinbangwa village, Sepik River, Papua New Guinea. Abelam, 20th century.



28-5 • WOMEN WEARING NET BAGS (BILUM)
Wahgi Valley, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea. 1990.

loosely woven work bags, are used to carry items from vegetables to beer. The bones of a deceased man may be stored in a special *bilum* in a village's men's house (which is similar in function to the Abelam *korambo* in FIGURE 28-4), while his widow wears his personal bag as a sign of mourning. Women wear decorative *bilum*, into which marsupial fur is often incorporated, as adornment, exchange them as gifts, and use them to carry babies.

Bilum are rich metaphorical symbols. Among the women of the Wahgi tribe, who live in the Wahgi Valley of the central highlands, seen in FIGURE 28-5, the term *bilum* may be used as a synonym for womb and bride, and they are also associated with ideas of female attractiveness; depending on how they are worn, they can indicate whether a girl is eligible for marriage.

In the past, *bilum* were made from natural fibers, most commonly the inner bark of a ficus plant. Today, while the technique for making them remains unchanged, a wide array of colorful contemporary fibers, including nylon and acrylic yarn, are used, and new designs incorporating complicated patterns and words are constantly appearing. *Bilum* are now made by women throughout Papua New Guinea, not just in the highlands. They are sold

commercially in markets and towns, and have become one of the country's national symbols.

SPIRIT POLES OF THE ASMAT OF WEST PAPUA The Asmat, who live along rivers in the coastal swamp forests of the southwest coast, were known in the past as warriors and headhunters. In Asmat culture, trees are identified with human beings, their fruit with human heads. Fruit-eating birds were thus the equivalent of headhunters, and were often represented in war and mortuary arts, along with the praying mantis, whose female bites off the head of the male during mating. In the past, the Asmat believed that death was always caused by an enemy, either by direct killing or through magic, and that it required revenge, usually in the form of taking an enemy's head, to appease the spirit of the person who had died and thus maintain balance between hostile groups.

Believing that the spirit of the dead person remained in the village, the Asmat erected elaborately sculpted memorial poles (FIG. 28-6), known as *bisj* (pronounced bish), which embodied the spirits of the ancestors and paid tribute to them. Placed in

front of special houses belonging to the village's men's society, *bisj* poles are generally carved from mangrove trees, although some in a museum in Leiden recently have been identified as wild nutmeg wood. The felling of a tree is a ritual act in which a group of men attack the tree as if it were an enemy. The figures on the poles represent the dead individuals who are to be avenged; small figures represent dead children. The bent pose of the figures associates them with the praying mantis. The large, lacy phalluses emerging from the figures at the top of the poles are carved from the projecting roots of the tree and symbolize male fertility, while the surface decoration suggests body ornamentation. The poles faced the river to ensure that the spirits of the dead would travel to the realm of the ancestors (*safan*), which lay beyond the sea. The *bisj* pole also served symbolically as the dugout canoe that would take the spirit of the deceased down the river to *safan*.

By carving *bisj* poles (usually for several deceased at the same time) and organizing a *bisj* feast, relatives publicly indicated their responsibility to avenge their dead in a headhunting raid. As part of the ceremonies, mock battles were held, the men boasting of their

bravery, the women cheering them on. After the ceremonies, the poles were left in the swamp to deteriorate and transfer their supernatural power back to nature. Today, Asmat continue to carve *bisj* poles and use them in funerary ceremonies, although they stopped headhunting in the 1970s. Poles are also made to sell to outsiders.

NEW IRELAND

MALAGAN DISPLAY OF NEW IRELAND New Ireland is one of the large eastern islands of the nation of Papua New Guinea. The northern people on the island still practice a complex set of death and commemorative rites known as *malagan* (pronounced malang-gan), which can take place as much as two years after a person's death. In the past, clan leaders rose to prominence primarily through *malagan* ceremonies that honored their wives' recently deceased family members. The greater the *malagan* ceremony, the greater prominence the clan leader had achieved.

Malagan also include rites to initiate young men and women into adulthood. After several months' training in seclusion in a ritual enclosure, they are presented to the public and given carved and



28-6 • ASMAT ANCESTRAL SPIRIT POLES (BISJ)

Buepis village, Fajit River, West Papua Province, Indonesia. c. 1960. Wood, paint, palm leaves, and fiber, height approx. 18' (5.48 m).



28-7 • MALAGAN DISPLAY

Medina village, New Ireland, Papua New Guinea. c. 1930. Height 6'10⁵/₈" (2.1 m), width 11'5³/₄" (3.5 m).
Museum für Völkerkunde, Basel, Switzerland.

painted figures. The combined funerary and initiation ceremonies include feasts, masked dances, and the creation of a special house to display elaborately carved and painted sculptures (FIG. 28-7) that honor the dead. The display house illustrated, which dates to the early 1930s, is more than 14 feet wide and honors 12 deceased individuals. The carvings are large (the first on the left is nearly 6 feet in height) and take the form of horizontal friezes, standing figures, and poles containing several figures. They are visually complex, with tensions created between solids and voids, and between the two-dimensional painted patterns on three-dimensional sculptural forms. Such displays are kept secret until their unveiling at the climax of festivities. After the ceremonies they are no longer considered ritually “active” and are destroyed or, since the late nineteenth century, sold to outsiders. *Malagan* figures are still being carved in association with continuing ceremonies.

NEW BRITAIN

TUBUAN MASK OF NEW BRITAIN In the Papua New Guinea province of New Britain—including the Duke of York Islands—Tubuan masks represent the Tolai male secret society, which has different levels or grades of increasing knowledge and power, and wields both spiritual and social control, especially during the three months of ceremonies known as the “Time of the Tubuan.” Though initiation to the society is the main purpose of the ceremonies, the men of the village, who have achieved power through the accumulation of wealth, and in the past through bravery in war, use this period to call up the spirits represented by the



28-8 • TUBUAN MASK BEING DANCED

Tolai people, Duke of York Islands, New Britain, Papua New Guinea. c. 1990. Cloth, paint, fiber, and feathers.

masks, who have the authority to settle disputes, stop fights, punish lawbreakers, and force the payment of debts. Political power and authority are underscored and enhanced by their appearance. In the past they had the power of life and death.

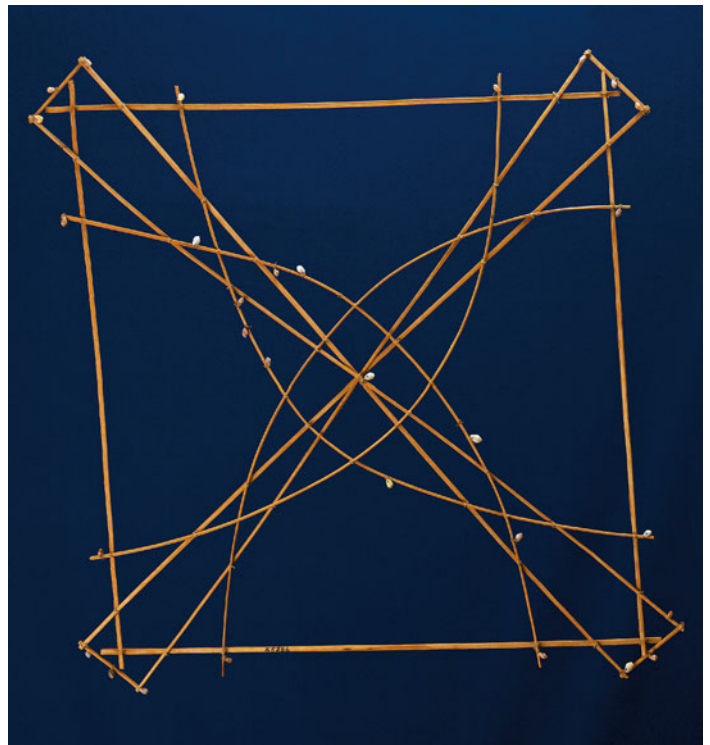
The masks represent both female and male spirits, though all the masks are danced by men. Local stories say women originally owned the masks and that men stole them. The **TUBUAN MASK** (FIG. 28-8) represents the Mother, who gives birth to her children, the Duk Duk masks, representing the new initiates into the society. With the appearance, first of the Mother masks, then of the Duk Duk masks, the initiates return to the village from the bush, where they have undergone intensive preparation to enter the society. The Tubuan mask has a distinctive, tall conical shape and prominent eyes formed by concentric white circles. The green leaf skirt is a very sacred part of the mask, which is itself made from painted bark cloth, various fibers, and feathers. Black feathers on top indicate a more powerful spirit than white feathers.

MICRONESIA

The majority of Micronesia's islands are small, low-lying coral atolls, but in the western region several are volcanic in origin. The eastern islands are more closely related culturally to Polynesia, while those in the west show connections to Melanesia, especially in the men's houses found on Palau and Yap. The atolls—circular coral reefs surrounding lagoons where islands once stood—have a limited range of materials for creating objects of any kind. Micronesians are known especially for their navigational skills and their fine canoes. They also create textiles from banana and coconut fibers, bowls from turtle shells, and abstract human figures from wood, which is scarce. As in other parts of the Pacific, tattooing and performative arts remain central to life.

WAPEPE NAVIGATION CHART Sailors from the Marshall Islands relied on celestial navigation—using the sun and moon and stars—as well as a detailed understanding of the ocean currents and trade winds to travel from one island to another. To teach navigation to younger generations, elders traditionally used stick charts (*wapepe* or *mattang*)—maps that showed land, but also the path from one island to the next, the water sailors would cross during their voyage.

In common use until the 1950s, stick charts (FIG. 28-9) were schematic diagrams of the prevailing ocean currents and the characteristic wave patterns encountered between islands. Currents are represented by sticks held together by coconut fibers; attached shells mark islands along the route. The arrangement of sticks around a shell indicates a zone of distinctive waves shaped by the effect of an island deflecting the prevailing wind. Such refracted waves enable a navigator to sense the proximity of land without being able to see it, and to discern the least difficult course for making landfall. Although *wapepe* are primarily functional, their combination of clarity, simplicity, and abstraction has an aesthetic impact.

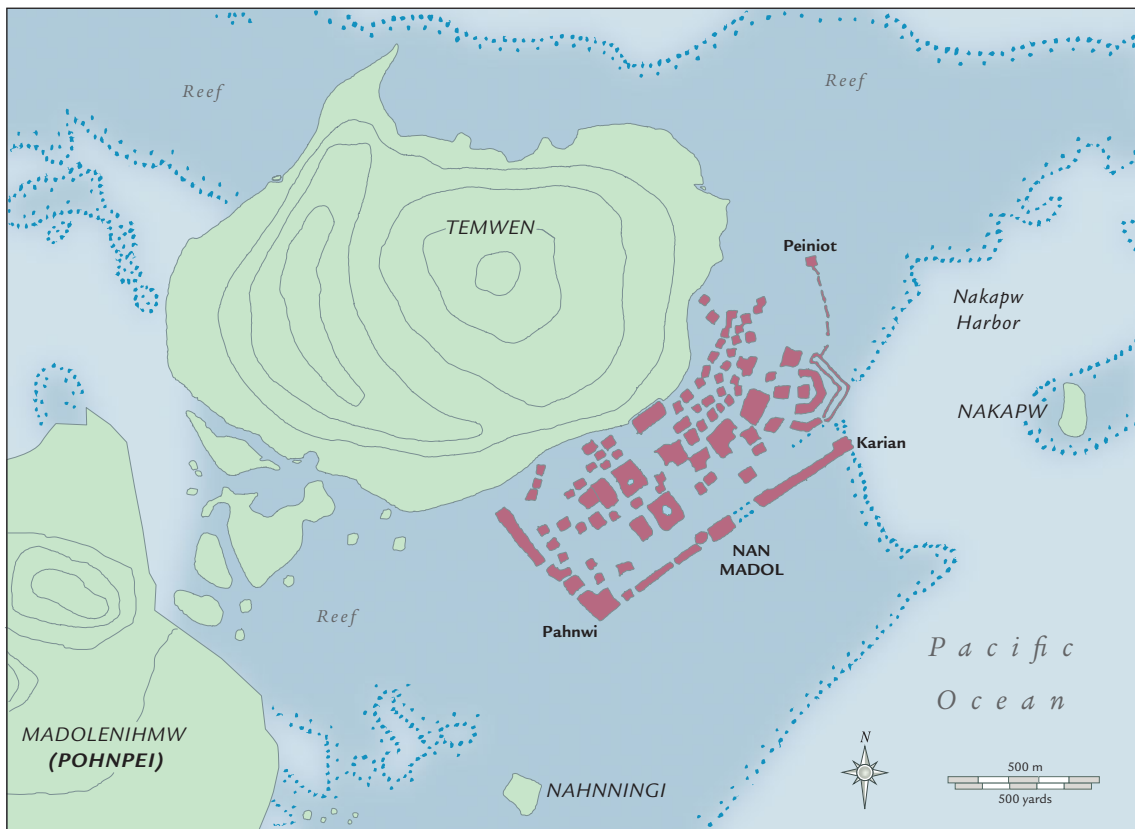


28-9 • WAPEPE NAVIGATION CHART

Marshall Islands. 19th century. Sticks, coconut fiber, and shells, 29½" × 29½" (75 × 75 cm). Peabody Essex Museum, Salem.

NAN MADOL The basalt cliffs of the island of Pohnpei provided the building material for one of the largest and most remarkable stone architectural complexes in Oceania. Nan Madol, on its southeast coast, consists of 92 artificial islands set within a network of canals covering about 170 acres (MAP 28-2). Seawalls and breakwaters 15 feet high and 35 feet thick protect the area from the ocean. When it was populated, openings in the breakwaters gave canoes access to the ocean and allowed seawater to flow in and out with the tides, flushing clean the canals. While other similar complexes have been identified in Micronesia, Nan Madol is the largest and most impressive, reflecting the importance of the kings who ruled from the site. The artificial islands and the buildings atop them were constructed between the early thirteenth century and the dynasty's political decline in the seventeenth. The site had already been abandoned by the time Europeans discovered it in the nineteenth century.

Nan Madol was an administrative and ceremonial center for powerful kings, who commanded a local labor force to construct this monumental city of as many as 1,000 people. Both the buildings and the underlying islands are built of massive masonry set in alternating layers of log-shaped stones and boulders of prismatic basalt. The largest of the artificial islets is more than 100 yards long, and one basalt cornerstone alone is estimated to weigh about 50 tons. The stone logs were split from the cliffs by alternately heating the stone and dousing it with water. Most of the islands are oriented northeast–southwest, receiving the benefit of the cooling prevailing winds.



MAP 28-2 • THE COMPLEX OF NAN MADOL

Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia.
c. 1200/1300–
c. 1500/1600.

The walls of the **ROYAL MORTUARY COMPOUND**, which once dominated the northeast side of Nan Madol (**FIG. 28-10**), rise in subtle upward and outward curves to a height of 25 feet. To achieve the sweeping, rising lines, the builders increased the number of stones in the header courses (those with the ends of the stones laid facing out along the wall) relative to the stretcher courses (those with the lengths of the stones laid parallel to the wall) as they came to the corners and entryways. The plan of the structure consists of progressively higher rectangles within rectangles—the outer walls leading by steps up to interior walls that lead up to a central courtyard with a small, cubical tomb.

POLYNESIA

The settlers of the far-flung islands of Polynesia developed distinctive cultural traditions but also retained linguistic and cultural affinities that reflect their common origin. Traditional Polynesian society was generally far more stratified than Melanesian society: A person's genealogy, tracing his or her descent from an ancestral god, determined his or her place in society. First-born children of the hereditary elite were considered the most sacred because they inherited more spiritual power (*mana*) at their birth. *Mana* could



28-10 • ROYAL MORTUARY COMPOUND, NAN MADOL
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. Basalt blocks, wall height up to 25' (7.62 m).

be gained through leadership, courage, or skill, but it could be lost because of failure in warfare. It was protected by strict laws of conduct called *tapu*, a word that came into the English language as “taboo.”

All of the arts in Polynesia were sacred, and their creation was a sacred act. Master artists were also ritual specialists. Objects were crafted from a variety of materials, some of which, like jadeite in New Zealand, were considered spiritually powerful. Some objects were practical, such as canoes, fishhooks, and weapons; others indicated the status and rank of the society’s elite. Objects had their own *mana*, which could increase or decrease depending on how successful they were in performing their functions. Quality and beauty were important. Objects were made to endure, and many were handed down as heirlooms from generation to generation. In addition, the human body itself was the canvas for the art of tattoo (*tatau* in several Polynesian languages).

Polynesian religions included many levels of gods, from creator gods and semidivine hero-gods (such as Maui, who appears in the stories of many of the Polynesian cultures) to natural forces, but the most important were ancestors, who became gods at their death. Since they remained influential in daily life, they had to be honored and placated, and their help was sought for important projects and in times of trouble. Throughout much of Polynesia, figures in human form—often generically called *tiki*—were carved in stone, wood, and in some places, including the Marquesas Islands, human bone. These statues represented the ancestors and were often placed on sacred ritual sites attended by ritual specialists (see FIG. 28-13) or, as in New Zealand, incorporated into meeting houses (see “Te-Hau-ki-Turanga,” page 872).

MARQUESAS ISLANDS

TATTOO IN THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS The art of tattoo was widespread and ancient in Oceania. Tattoo chisels made of bone have been found in Lapita sites. They are quite similar to the tools used to decorate Lapita pottery, suggesting some symbolic connection between the marking of both pottery and human skin. The Polynesians, descendants of the Lapita people, brought tattooing with them as they migrated throughout the Pacific, and as they became isolated from each other over time, distinctive styles evolved. Spirals became a hallmark of the Maori facial tattoo (*moko*), and rows of triangles became prominent in Hawaiian designs.

The people of the Marquesas Islands—an archipelago about 900 miles northeast of Tahiti—were the most extensively tattooed of all Polynesians. The process of tattooing involves shedding blood, the most *tapu* (sacred) substance in Polynesia. In the Marquesas, the process for a young man of high social rank began around age 18; by age 30 he would be fully tattooed. Because of the sacredness and prestige of the process, some men continued to be tattooed until their skin was completely covered and the designs disappeared. Marquesan women were also tattooed, usually on the hands, ankles, lips, and behind the ears.

Tattooing was painful and expensive. Though women could be tattooed with little ceremony in their own homes, in the case of both men and women of high rank, special houses were built for the occasion. The master tattooer and his assistants had to be fed and paid, and at the end of the session a special feast was held to display the new tattoos. Each design had a name and a meaning. Tattooing marked passages in people’s lives and their social positions; it commemorated special events or accomplishments. Some tattoos denoted particular men’s societies or eating groups. Especially for men, tattoos demonstrated courage and were essential to their sexual attractiveness to women.

Tattooing was forbidden in the nineteenth century by French colonial administrators and Catholic missionaries, and it died out in the Marquesas. Beginning in the 1970s, however, there was a resurgence of the art throughout the Pacific, and in 1980 **TEVE TUPUHIA** became the first Marquesan in modern times to be fully tattooed (FIG. 28-11). He went to Samoa—the only place in Polynesia where the traditional art form continued—to be tattooed by master Samoan artist Lese I’io. The process took six weeks and cost \$35,000. Teve based his tattoo designs on drawings made by George Langsdorff, a German naturalist who visited



28-11 • TEVE TUPUHIA

Marquesan man tattooed in 1980 by Samoan Lese I’io.

A BROADER LOOK | Te-Hau-ki-Turanga

New Zealand was settled sometime after 800 CE by intrepid seafaring Polynesians now known as the Maori. As part of the process of adapting their Polynesian culture to the temperate New Zealand environment, they began to build wooden-frame homes, the largest of which, the chief's house, evolved after Western contact into the meeting house (*whare nui*). The meeting house stands on an open plaza (*marae*), a sacred place where a Maori tribe (*iwi*) or subtribe (*hapu*) still today greets visitors, discusses important issues, and mourns the dead. In it, tribal history and genealogy are recorded and preserved. Created by the master carver Raharuhi Rukupo and his 18 named assistants in the early 1840s, **TE-HAU-KI-TURANGA** is the oldest existing,

fully decorated meeting house in New Zealand (**FIG. 28-12**). Built by Rukupo as a memorial to his elder brother, its name refers to the region of New Zealand where it was made—Turanga, today Gisborne and its region, on the northeast coast of North Island—and has been translated as “The Breezes of Turanga” or “The Spirit of Turanga.”

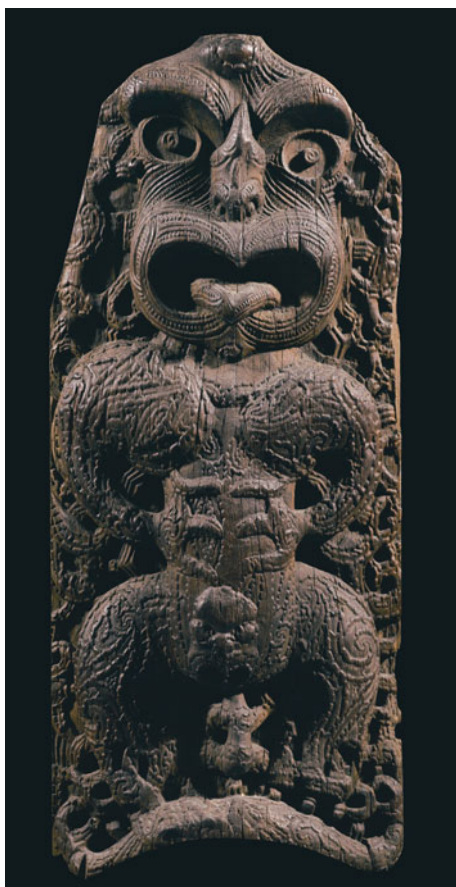
In this area of New Zealand, the meeting house symbolizes the tribe's founding ancestor, for whom it is often named. The ridgepole is the backbone, the rafters are the ribs, and the slanting bargeboards—the boards attached to the projecting end of the gable—are the outstretched enfolding arms. The face appears in the gable mask. Relief figures of ancestors cover the support poles,

wall planks, and the lower ends of the rafters. The ancestors, in effect, support the house. They were thought to take an active interest in community affairs and to participate in the discussions held in the meeting house. Rukupo, an important political and religious leader as well as a master carver, included an unusual naturalistic portrait of himself among them.

Painted curvilinear patterns (**kowhaiwhai**) decorate the rafters in white on a red and black background. The **koru** pattern, a curling stalk with a bulb at the end that resembles the young tree fern, dominates the design system. Lattice panels (**tukutuku**) made by women fill the spaces between the wall planks. Because ritual prohibitions, or taboos, prevented



28-12 • Raharuhi Rukupo, master carver TE-HAU-KI-TURANGA (MAORI MEETING HOUSE)
Gisborne/Turanga, New Zealand; built and owned by the Rongowhakaata people of Turanga. 1842–1843, restored in 1935. Wood, shell, grass, flax, and pigments. Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington. (Neg. B18358)



28-13 • CARVED FIGURE FROM STOREHOUSE DOORWAY

Ngāti Pāoa, Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand. 1500–1800. Wood, height 33 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (86 cm). Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

women from entering the meeting house, they worked from the outside and wove the panels from the back. They created the black, white, and orange patterns from grass, flax, and flat slats. Each pattern has a symbolic meaning: chevrons representing the teeth of the sea monster Taniwha, steps the stairs of heaven climbed by the hero-god Tawhaki, and diamonds the flounder.

When Captain Cook arrived in New Zealand in the second half of the eighteenth century, each tribe and geographical region had its own style. A storehouse doorway from the Ngāti Pāoa tribe (**FIG. 28-13**), who lived in the Hauraki Gulf area to the west of Turanga, dates to this period of time (or earlier) and shows the soft, shallow surface carving resulting from the use of stone tools. In comparison, a

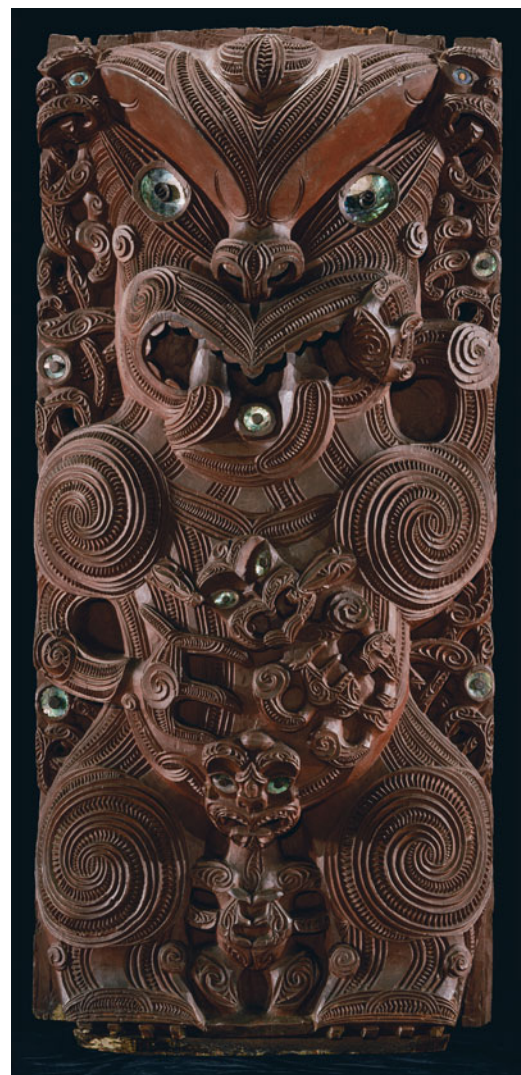
house panel (**poupou**) from Te-Hau-ki-Turanga (**FIG. 28-14**), carved with steel tools, shows the deeply cut, very precisely detailed surface carving characteristic of that time.

As is typical throughout Polynesia (see **FIG. 28-16**), the figures face frontally and have large heads with open eyes. The Hauraki Gulf figure has both hands placed on its stomach and represents a male ancestor, while the Te-Hau-ki-Turanga figure is a female ancestor nursing a child. In both, a small figure, representing their descendants, stands between their legs.

Considered a national treasure by the Maori, this meeting house was restored in 1935 by Maori artists who knew the old, traditional methods; it is now preserved at the Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington and considered *taonga* (cultural treasure).

28-14 • POUPOU (PANEL)

From Te-Hau-ki-Turanga. Wood and red pigment, height 4'7" (140 cm). Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.



interior side wall



front



interior rear wall

Parts of the meeting house

the Marquesas in 1804 as part of a Russian scientific expedition. Today, Marquesan-style tattoo designs are seen throughout French Polynesia.

HAWAII

FEATHER CLOAK FROM HAWAII The Hawaiian islanders had one of the most highly stratified of all Polynesian societies, with valleys and whole islands ruled by high chiefs. Soon after contact with the West, the entire archipelago was unified for the first time under the rule of Kamehameha I (r. 1810–1819), who assumed the title of king in the European manner.

Among the members of the Hawaiian elite, feathered capes and cloaks were emblems of high social status. A full-length cloak made with thousands of red and yellow feathers (**FIG. 28-15**), was reserved for the highest ranks of the elite men and called an *'ahu 'ula* (“red cloak”)—the color red is associated with high status and rank throughout Polynesia. Often given as gifts to important visitors to Hawaii, this particular cloak was presented in 1843 to Commodore Lawrence Kearny, commander of the USS *Constellation*, by King Kamehameha III (r. 1825–1854).

Draped over the wearer's shoulders, such a cloak creates a sensuously textured and colored abstract design, which in this example joins to create matching patterns of paired crescents on front and back. The cloak's foundation consisted of coconut fiber netting onto which were tied bundles of feathers—part of an annual tribute paid to the king by his subjects. The red, and especially the yellow feathers, were highly prized and came from several species of birds including the *i'iwi*, *apapane*, *'o'o*, and *mamo* (which is now extinct). In some cases, each bird yielded only seven or eight feathers, making the collecting of feathers very labor-intensive and increasing the value of the cloaks.

Cloaks were so closely associated with the spiritual power

(*mana*) of the elite person that they could be made only by specialists trained in both the complicated technique of manufacture and the rituals attending their fabrication. Surrounded by protective objects, they created the cloak while reciting the chief's genealogy to imbue it with the power of his ancestors. As a result, the cloaks were seen as protective of the wearer, while also proclaiming his elite status and political and economic power.

Feathers were used for decorating not just cloaks, but also helmets, capes, blankets, and garlands (*leis*), all of which conferred status and prestige. The annual tribute paid to the king by his subjects included feathers, and tall feather pompons (*kahili*) mounted on long slender sticks were symbols of royalty. Even the effigies of gods that Hawaiian warriors carried into battle were made of light, basketlike structures covered with feathers.

MONUMENTAL MOAI ON RAPA NUI

Rapa Nui (Easter Island) is the most isolated inhabited locale in Oceania, located 2,300 miles west of the coast of South America and 1,200 miles from Pitcairn Island, the nearest Polynesian outpost. Three volcanoes, one at each corner, make up the small triangular island. Originally known to its native inhabitants as *Te Pito o te Henúa* (Navel of the World) and now known as Rapa Nui, it was named Easter Island by Captain Jacob Roggeveen, the Dutch explorer who first landed there on Easter Sunday in 1722. Rapa Nui became part of Chile in 1888.

MONUMENTAL MOAI Rapa Nui is the site of Polynesia's most impressive stone sculpture. Though many imaginative theories have been posited regarding the origins of its statues—from space aliens to Native Americans—they are most definitely part of an established Polynesian tradition. Sacred religious sites (*marae*) with stone altar platforms (*ahu*) are common throughout Polynesia. On



28-15 • FEATHER CLOAK, KNOWN AS THE KEARNY CLOAK

Hawaii. c. 1843. Red, yellow, and black feathers, olona cordage, and netting, length 55¾" (143 cm). Bishop Museum, Honolulu.

King Kamehameha III (r. 1825–1854) presented this cloak to Commodore Lawrence Kearny, commander of the frigate USS *Constellation*.

Rapa Nui the Polynesians who arrived at the island in canoes between 800 and 1200 CE built most of the *ahu* near the coast, parallel to the shore, and began to erect stone figures on them, perhaps as memorials to deceased chiefs or ancestors. Nearly 1,000 of these figures, called **moai**, have been found on the island, including some 400 unfinished ones in the quarry at Rano Raraku where they were being carved. The statues themselves are made from yellowish-brown volcanic tuff. On their heads, *pukao* (topknots of hair) were rendered in red scoria, another volcanic stone. When the statues were in place, the insertion of white coral and stone “opened” the eyes. In 1978, several figures on Ahu Nau Nau (**FIG. 28-16**) were restored to their original condition. These are about 36 feet tall, but *moai* range in size from much smaller to a 65-foot statue that is still in the quarry, where the sculptures were produced before being transported up to 11 miles to the sites of the *anu*. A recent theory proposes that the completed *moai* were “walked” from the quarry to the *anu* as handlers rocked them from side to side using attached ropes. The fragmentary remains of statues, which line the road away from the quarry, indicate that not all *moai* completed the journey.

Like other Polynesian statues, the *moai* face frontally. Their large heads have deep-set eyes under a prominent brow ridge; a long, concave, pointed nose; a small mouth with pursed lips; and an angular chin. The extremely elongated earlobes have parallel engraved lines that suggest ear ornaments. The figures have schematically indicated breastbones and pectorals, and small arms with hands pressed close to the sides. Since their bodies emerge from the ground at just below waist level, they have no legs.

The island’s indigenous population, which has been estimated at 3,000 people when the Dutch arrived in 1722, was nearly eradicated in 1877 when Peruvian slave traders precipitated an epidemic of smallpox and tuberculosis that left only 110 inhabitants alive. Today, a vibrant population of some 5,000 people is known especially for its energetic and athletic dance performances and thrives primarily on tourism.

SAMOA

TAPA (SLAPO) IN SAMOA As they migrated across the Pacific, Polynesians brought with them the production of bark cloth. Known by various names throughout the Pacific, most commonly



28-16 • MOAI ANCESTOR FIGURES

Ahu Nau Nau, Rapa Nui (Easter Island). c. ?1000–1500 CE, restored 1978. Volcanic stone (tuffa), average height approx. 36' (11 m).

 **Watch** a video about Easter Island on myartslab.com

as **tapa**, in Samoa bark cloth is called **siapo**. It is usually made by women, although sometimes men help obtain the bark or decorate the completed cloth. In Samoa, *siapo* is made by stripping the inner bark from branches of the paper mulberry tree (banyan and breadfruit are sometimes used in other archipelagos). The bark is beaten with a wooden mallet, then folded over and beaten again, to various degrees of softness. Larger pieces can be made by building up the cloth in a process of felting or using natural pastes as glue. The heavy wooden mallets used for beating the cloth are often incised with complex patterns, which leave impressions like watermarks in the cloth, viewable when held up to the light.

Plain and decorated *tapa* of various thicknesses and qualities was used throughout Polynesia for clothing, sails, mats, and ceremonial purposes, including wrapping the dead. *Tapa* was also used to cover wooden or wicker frames to make human effigies in the Marquesas and Rapa Nui, serving a purpose we still do not completely understand. In western Polynesia (Samoa and Tonga), very large pieces, 7–10 feet across and hundreds of feet long, were traditionally given in ceremonial exchanges of valuables and as gifts. Along with fine mats, *siapo* is still sometimes given on important ceremonial occasions. And *tapa* was widely used for clothing. Samoan men and women wore large pieces of *siapo* as wraparound skirts (*lavalava*) (see FIG. 28–19). Special chiefs, called talking chiefs, who spoke on behalf of the highest-ranking chief in the village council, wore special *tapa* skirts called *siapo vala* (FIG. 28–17).

Distinctive design styles for *tapa* evolved across the Pacific, even when the cloth used was essentially the same from one island to the next. It could be dyed bright yellow with turmeric

or brown with dyes made from nuts. It could also be exposed to smoke to turn it black or darker brown. Today, contemporary fabric paint is often used. Decorative designs were made through a variety of means from freehand painting to printing with tiny bamboo stamps, or using stencils, as is done in Fiji. This Samoan *siapo vala* has designs that were produced by first placing the cloth over a wooden design tablet, an **upeti**, and then rubbing pigment over the cloth to pick up the carved pattern. Subsequently, this lighter rubbed pattern was overpainted by hand. The result is a boldly patterned, symmetrical design.

RECENT ART IN OCEANIA

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a cultural resurgence swept across the Pacific. Growing independence and autonomy throughout the region, the model of civil rights and other movements in the United States, and dramatic increases in tourism, among other factors, brought a new awareness of the importance of indigenous cultures. Many of them had been fundamentally changed, if not nearly destroyed, by colonial rule and missionary efforts to eradicate local customs and beliefs.

FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

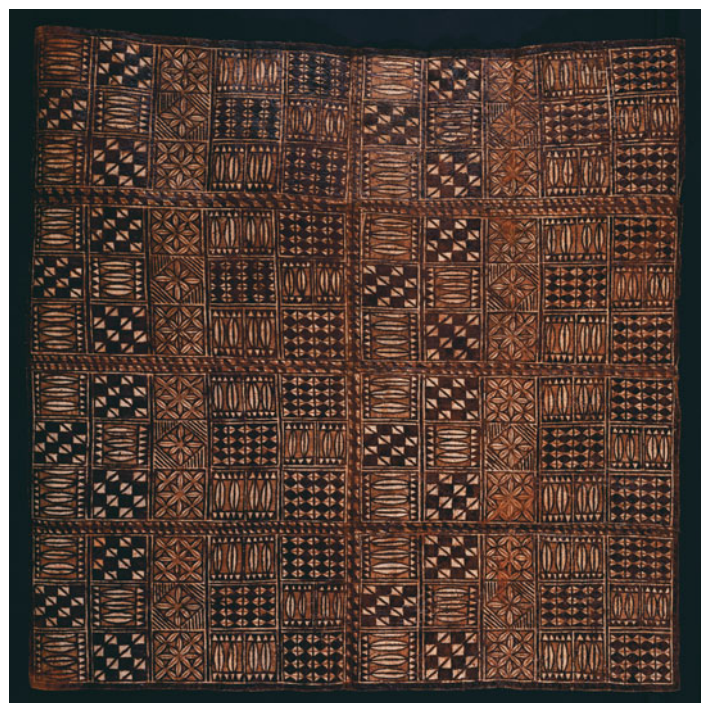
In the early 1970s, the South Pacific Commission conceived the idea of an arts festival that would promote traditional song and dance. The first Festival of Pacific Arts was held in 1972 in Fiji; subsequent festivals, held every four years, have been hosted by New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tahiti, Australia, Cook Islands, Samoa, New Caledonia, Palau, and American Samoa.

Musicians from the highlands of Papua New Guinea (FIG. 28–18) were among the more than 2,000 participants from 27 countries at the tenth festival at Pago Pago, American Samoa, in 2008. Carrying traditional drums, they wore elaborate headdresses topped with bird of paradise feathers and neck ornaments made from kina shells, a once valuable medium of exchange in New Guinea.

In the 36 years since their founding, the festivals have had an enormous impact on the arts. Many Pacific cultures now have their own festivals; in the Marquesas Islands one is held every four years. In an age of globalization and the Internet, festivals are one of the main ways in which young people become involved in, and learn about, their culture and heritage. However, the festivals are not without controversy: Some people are critical of an increasing level of professionalism and commercialism.

CENTRAL DESERT PAINTING

In Australia, indigenous artists have adopted canvas and acrylic paint for rendering imagery traditionally associated with more ephemeral media like body and sand drawing. Sand drawing is an ancient ritual art form that involves creating large colored designs on bare earth. Made with red and yellow ochers, seeds, and feathers arranged on the ground in symbolic patterns, they are used to



28–17 • TAPA (SIAPO VALA)

Samoa. 20th century. 58 $\frac{5}{8}$ " \times 57" (149 \times 145 cm). Auckland Museum, New Zealand. (AM 46892)



28-18 • MUSICIANS FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA AT THE FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS
Pago Pago, American Samoa, 2008.

convey tribal knowledge to initiates. In 1971, several indigenous Pintubi men who were trained and initiated in sacred knowledge, and were living in government-controlled Papunya Tula in the Central Desert of Australia, were encouraged by non-indigenous art teacher Geoffrey Bardon to transform their ephemeral art into a painted mural on the school wall. The success of the public mural encouraged community elders to allow others to try their hand at painting. In Utopia, a neighboring community, it was the women who began painting in 1988 after success in tie-dyeing with fabrics. Art galleries, originally located in Alice Springs, spread the art form, and “dot paintings” were a worldwide phenomenon by the late 1980s. Paintings also became an economic mainstay for many Aboriginal groups in the central and western Australia desert. Although they are creating work for sale, the artists can paint only stories to which they have rights, and must be careful to depict only what a non-initiated person is allowed to know.

Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri (c. 1932–2002), a founder of the Papunya Tula Artists Cooperative in 1972, gained an international reputation after a 1988 exhibition of his paintings. He worked with his canvases on the floor, as in traditional sand painting, using ancient patterns and colors, principally red and yellow, as well as touches of blue. The superimposed layers of concentric circles and undulating lines and dots in a painting like *Man’s Love Story* (see “A Closer Look,” page 878) create an effect of shifting colors and lights that was highly valued in a global art world.

The painting seems entirely abstract, but it actually conveys a narrative involving two mythical ancestors. One of these ancestors—represented by the white U shape on the left, seated in front of a water hole with an ants’ nest indicated by concentric circles—came to Papunya in search of honey ants. His digging stick lies to his right, and white sugary leaves lie to his left. The straight white “journey line” represents his trek from the west. The second ancestor—represented by the brown-and-white U-shaped form—came from the east, leaving footprints, and sat down by another water hole nearby. He began to spin a hair string on a spindle (the form leaning toward the upper right of the painting) but was distracted by thoughts of the woman he loved, who belonged to a kinship group into which he could not marry. When she approached, he let his hair string blow away (represented by the brown flecks below him) and lost all his work. Four women (the dotted U shapes) came at night and surrounded the camp to guard the lovers. Rich symbolism also fills other areas of the painting: the white footprints are those of another ancestral figure following a woman, and the wavy line at the top is the path of yet another ancestor. The black, dotted oval area indicates the site where young men were taught this story. The long horizontal bars are mirages, while the wiggly shapes represent caterpillars, a source of food. Possum Tjapaltjarri painted numerous variations of this Dreaming story.

The painting is effectively a map showing the ancestors’ journeys. To begin the work Possum Tjapaltjarri first painted the

A CLOSER LOOK | *Man's Love Story*

by Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. 1978. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas.

6'11¾" × 8'4¼" (2.15 × 2.57 m). Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council Contemporary Art Purchase Grant, 1980

Designs may have multiple meanings. A circle can represent a water hole or ant hole, as here, but also a hole where the ancestral Spirit Beings exited and entered the earth, a person as viewed from above, or a campfire.

Honey ants are a sweet delicacy. A digging stick is used to open up the nest, exposing the ant colony so that the ants can be removed and eaten.

Hair is spun into string using a spindle that is rotated across the thigh. The string is surprisingly strong and was used for utilitarian and ceremonial purposes, depending on the region.



Synthetic polymer, or acrylic, paint replaces the earth-toned ochers used in the original sand paintings that provide the model for paintings such as this.

Women are important figures in the Dreaming stories and are represented in several places in this painting. Indigenous women artists paint their own stories, too, which usually center on food and food gathering.

The dots are made using a stick with a round, flat end that is dipped into the paint. Several people can work at the same time to fill in dotted areas.

 **View** the Closer Look for *Man's Love Story* on myartslab.com

landscape features and the impressions left on the earth by the figures—their tracks, direction lines, and the U-shaped marks they left when sitting. Then, working carefully, dot by dot, he captured the vast expanse and shimmering light of the arid landscape. The painting's resemblance to modern Western painting styles such as Abstract Expressionism, gestural painting, pointillism, or color field painting (see Chapter 32) is accidental. Possum Tjapaltjarri's work is rooted in the mythic narratives of the Dreaming. He and other contemporary artists working in both age-old and new media continue to create arts that express the deepest meanings of their culture.

SHIGEYUKI KIHARA

Many contemporary Pacific artists live in urban settings, were trained at colleges and universities, and create artworks in modern media that deal with a range of political issues, including the colonial legacy, discrimination, misappropriation, cultural identity, and land rights. Shigeyuki Kihara is a multimedia and performance artist of Samoan and Japanese descent who lives in New Zealand. In **ULUGALI'I SAMOA: SAMOAN COUPLE** (FIG. 28-19), she explores issues of culture, identity, stereotypes, authenticity, representation, and gender roles through a reappropriation of

nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial photographs. Made in studio settings, colonial photographs were often turned into postcards depicting Pacific island men and women, both alone and in couples, the women as bare-breasted and sexualized “dusky maidens” and the men as emasculated “noble savages.” Kihara confronts these stereotyped images of the South Seas in carefully restaged, sepia-toned photographs that, through ironic twists, also directly challenge the viewer’s understanding of gender and gender roles.

In this photograph of a male and female couple both figures are clothed as they might have been in the nineteenth century, wearing large pieces of Samoan bark cloth (see FIG. 28-17), and holding traditional Samoan status objects—a plaited fan and a fly-whisk. Kihara herself poses as the native woman, but has also superimposed her own face, with wig and mustache, onto the body of the male figure. *Ulugali’i Samoa: Samoan Couple* is part of a series of photographs called “Fa’a fafine: In a Manner of a Woman.” *Fa’a fafine* is the Samoan term for a biological male who lives as a woman, the “third gender” socially accepted historically throughout much of Polynesia (as in the Americas, see FIG. 27-23). Kihara is, herself, *fa’a fafine*, a transgender woman who lives and identifies in that gender role. In this photograph and the others in the series, she blurs stereotyped notions of who or what is male or female, original or copy, reality or perception. This work was part of the exhibition “Shigeyuki Kihara: Living Photographs,” the first solo exhibition by a Samoan in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Her work and that of other urban artists draws on the richness of Pacific cultures while addressing global issues of the twenty-first century.



28-19 • Shigeyuki Kihara *ULUGALI’I SAMOA: SAMOAN COUPLE*

2004–2005. C-type photograph, edition 5, 31½" × 23⅜" (80 × 60 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Shigeyuki Kihara, 2009

THINK ABOUT IT

- 28.1** Explain how differences in environment, including available resources, affect the nature of the visual arts in the Pacific. Include architectural forms and body adornment in your answer.
- 28.2** How is the human body adorned and/or depicted in art across the Pacific? How do these adornments and depictions define or enhance status, authority, and gender roles?
- 28.3** Assess the importance of ancestors and the different ways in which ancestors are engaged, honored, or invoked through various Pacific art forms. Focus your answer on two works from two different cultural and geographic settings.
- 28.4** Discuss the impact of contact with Western society on the arts and cultures of the peoples of the Pacific. How are contemporary indigenous artists throughout the Pacific addressing the issues of their own time and place?

CROSSCURRENTS



FIG. 27-9



FIG. 28-17

how they relate to the cultural values and distinctive environments of the artists who made them and the societies that valued them.

The production of fabric was an important aspect of the culture of both Peru and Samoa. Although there are compelling similarities in the designs of these two cloths, their style, media, and their context of production are distinct in significant ways. Discuss these differences and

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